

An Analysis and Comparison of  
the Comic Characters in the  
Plays of Plautus and Terence

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I

Introduction

Plautus and Terence are responsible, to a great extent, for the development of the theater we have today. The influence they have had on playwrights such as Moliere and Shakespeare is not always completely appreciated. The two main divisions of Comedy under which all comic plays, except those of Aristophanes', can be grouped, go back to these two Roman writers.

Though the modern theater does owe much to Plautus and Terence, these two men do not deserve all the credit for their plays. In other words, the plays which they claim to be their own are really not entirely their own. For instance, it can be proven from comparative analysis that Plautus got most of his ideas, or directly copied them from Menander, a Greek playwright. Plautus' plays are not original, nor are they merely translations of Menander's plays.

The frames and outlines were Greek, but the coloring was Roman. The spirit which expresses itself in the plays is the youthful and hopeful and boisterous spirit of Rome when the war with Hannibal was at an end. 1

The plays of Terence are likewise Greek in origin. His plays are also heavily based on those of Menander.

Terence as a rule, does not base his plays upon a single Greek play, but levies contributions from two or more, and exercises his talent in harmonizing the different elements. 2

We see that both authors base their plays on pre-existing Greek plays. It becomes understandable then why many of the characters have Greek names. This also offers one of the rea-

sons why the scenes or settings were always in some Greek town. There are other reasons for this which are directly connected with the political situation in the Roman empire at this time. However, I do not intend to go into those reasons here because such treatment could be a thesis in itself. It suffices to say that the political state of affairs at this time in the Roman empire advised that the characters and settings of these Roman plays be Greek for the sake of the playwrights.

One factor which strongly determined how each of these men wrote was that of the audience for whom they were writing. Plautus wrote strictly for the stage and the audience in general. He had to write to arouse uproarious laughter from the audience. If Plautus had not made his audiences laugh, he would have thought himself a failure and his audience would have thought likewise.

Plautus talked directly to his audience when the action failed to get a response, calling out to the man in the back row not to be so slow to see a joke, or to the women in the front to stop chattering and let their husbands listen. 3

Plautus' comedies were based merely on a succession of very funny scenes strung together by some familiar story line of that time.

Terence did not write for the stage, but for his small group of friends.

The plays show nothing more clearly than that the audience they were primarily written for was this little group of close friends and not the vulgar crowd. 4  
His audience enjoyed using their minds on

an ingenious plot. He could dispense with the obviously comic and follow his own strong bent toward character and situation. 5

The fact that Terence often uses a double plot in his plays is sufficient proof of this point.

Before entering into discussion about the plays of each author, let us note the different divisions of comedy in the plays. Both dramatists deal with exactly the same sort of life and people. The characters in the plays of one are duplicated in the plays of the other, and in both, the background is the family life of the day. Yet Plautus' world of comedy is different from that of Terence's.

There are many definitions of comedy, but the definition I will use here seems to fit the situation the best. Comedy, as a form of drama, is defined as:

a type of drama which aims primarily to amuse and which ends happily. The play presents the incongruous aspects of human speech, character and conduct as they are displayed in social life. Comedy deals with the "ways of the world" and does not often come to grips with profound moral issues; it is not primarily concerned with the basic problem of good and evil. Concerned with man's relation to society, it is willing to seek a solution in compromise and the best judgment of society rather than in immutable truths or one's own conscience. 6

Now, more particularly, comedy for the Romans at this time could be defined as:

a presentation of social types in a stylized intrigue of stratagem and conspiracy which ends happily. 7

There is a twofold division of comedy into the comedy of

humors and manners.

The comedy of humors is a type of comedy which is based on the humor or dominant trait of an individual. This method of character analysis tends toward oversimplification and freakish and farcical characters. 8

The comedy of manners is a type of play which satirizes the extremes of fashion and manners-the acquired follies-of a sophisticated society. In this form of comedy, the plot(unrealistic but clever and complex) is less important than the characters(who are seldom highly individualized): and both plot and character are less important than the air of refined cynicism and the witty, scintillating dialogue. 9

Taking another look at the two authors, we see that their type of comedy overlaps into both these divisions. However, it seems that Plautus belongs more to the comedy of manners than to the comedy of humors. This is basically true because of the lack of individualization in his comic characters. His plot is much less important than his characters. His dialogue is cynical and witty.

Terence's type of comedy can be said to belong more to the comedy of humors. His plot is as important if not more important than his characters. His dialogue is not quite as cynical and witty as Plautus. Terence also tends heavily toward individualizing his characters.

Both types of comedy can be said to be in each author's works but one author can be fitted more into one type than can the other.

Along with the division of comedy into humors and manners, there is yet another division into high and low comedy. High

comedy is a very intellectual comedy which challenges the mind. Low comedy is commonly given the term "slap-stick". Low comedy offers the mind no challenge. It is an overly-obvious type of humor.

These terms (low and high comedy) can also be applied to the comedy of Plautus and Terence. Plautus excels in the low type of comedy while Terence thrives on the high and more intellectual type of humor.

### General Conclusions About the Plays of Each Author

Before comparing any particular examples of the comic characters in either Plautus' or Terence's plays, let us first make a few general conclusions about the plays of each author.

In the plays of Plautus we notice that the plays, almost all of them, are indescribably funny. This is a result of the amount of slap-stick comedy, which Plautus seems to work best with. Plautus usually starts out in a ridiculous situation and things hardly ever get better until the very end. The plots of Plautus grow on confusion.

Another element which makes the plays of Plautus so funny is the language he uses. The language is openly suggestive and double meaning for the sake of making people laugh. Also he uses the bedroom situation, though not very often, in the same way to achieve the same end.

We find the best example of both of these comedy devices in Casina. The story goes like this. Chalinus and Olympio, both slaves of Lysidamus, had been arguing about who would get to marry Casina for a very long time. They both claimed to love her. It happened that they finally cast lots for her and Olympio won her. Chalinus, not wishing to give up his loved one so easily, dressed up as Casina on the day that she and Olympio were to be married.

After the wedding meals and games were over, the would-be bride and bridegroom retire to the bridal chamber. Here Olympio makes the bride comfortable on the couch. He then proceeds to search her for a sword which she reportedly has hidden on her

so as to kill him when he tries to make love to her.

The next thing we observe is his speedy exit from the bridal chamber. Cleostrata, wife to Lysidamus, and Myrrhina, wife to Alcesimus, a friend of Lysidamus, are present and Olympic tells them what has just happened in the bridal chamber.

- Cleost. Come, boldly now. After you got on the couch-I want you to go on with the account from there.
- Ol. Oh, it was enormous! I was afraid she had a sword; I began searching her. While I'm searching for her sword, to see if she has one, I got a hold of the hilt. On second thoughts, though, she didn't have a sword, for that would have been cold.
- Cleost. Go on.
- Ol. But I'm ashamed to.
- Cleost. It was not a radish, was it?
- Ol. No.
- Cleost. Or a cucumber?
- Ol. Heavens! Certainly not! No vegetable at all-at any rate, whatever it was, certainly no blight had ever touched it. It was full grown whatever it was.
- Myrr. What happened next? Be explicit.
- Ol. Then I call her by name: "Now, now, Casina," says I, "my own little wifey, what makes you so cruel to me, your own husband? Good heavens I don't deserve to have you act so toward me, indeed I don't, just for trying to get you for myself." Not a word does she say, and pulls her clothes tight around the part of her body that makes a woman of you. When I see she's barricaded herself, I beg her not to be so awfully coy. 10

In scenes like the one above, he becomes so involved in describing the scene that some people think that it would have been better if that section had not been printed. Though it is not in keeping with the best of moral codes, it is very funny

and should not be morally offensive for any normal person.

Plautus also uses for comic characters social figures in Rome during his time, who usually would not let happen to them what Plautus has happen to them in his plays.

The type of comedy Plautus has his characters portray is of course the most basic reason for the hilarity of his plays. The comedy is so obvious that a person could not miss the point of the humorous action. It was all to incongruous that the things which happen to Plautus' characters should happen to them. This is, by the way, the essence of good comedy.

Plautus uses all types of character devices to make his audience laugh. He uses wise cracks and cynical remarks to the audience from one of his on-stage characters very heavily in all of his plays. Along with these wise remarks, he uses a direct insult occasionally from one on stage character to another. He also uses the lesser comic characters such as the cooks, and the simple or stupid character. We see a good example of this in The Pot of Gold. In this scene we see the two cooks, Anthrax and Congrio, talking with the slave Pythodicus.

Pyth. After master did the marketing and hired the cooks and these music girls at the forum, he told me to take and divide all he'd got into two parts.

Anthr. By Jupiter, you shan't make two parts of me, let me tell you that plainly! If you'd like to have the whole of me anywhere, why, I'll accommodate you.

Cong. You pretty boy, yes, you nice little everybody's darling you! Why, if anyone wanted to make two parts of a real man out of you, you oughtn't to be cut up

about it. 11

One of his favorite pre-occupations was making fools out of the more serious persons in the plays through use of clever schemes concocted by one of his comic characters.

The final important device he is noted for using is the blabber-mouth device. He worked this particular device when things seemed to start going well. One of his characters would discuss the scheme down to its smallest detail, the person against whom the scheme is being worked listening secretly all the time.

All of Plautus' plots revolve around love and the lovers. The slave, Plautus' favorite character, always managed to get involved in the thick of the problems that came up regarding the lovers. He was involved because he was obliged to obey and be loyal to his master. When his master had problems with his lover, that is, his father had promised him to the wrong girl for marriage, or he needed money to buy his mistress so he could get married to her, usually against his father's wishes, these problems became the slave's just as well as the master's. The slave's way of getting out of this jam resulted in a scheme to steal or trick somebody out of the money or the girl. The slave was the mastermind of these schemes working them out with the help of his master's relatives or his friends. The slave put his heart into most of these schemes because he realized that through a successful scheme he could win his freedom. Though the slaves more often became free than they did not, they still remained loyal to their master and served them as if

they still were slaves.

Most of the time the slave got into deep trouble as a result of obeying his master since often times it was against the father's wishes that the scheme was being brought about or else it was the father against whom the scheme was being directed.

While making general conclusions about the plays of Terence we notice first of all that his plays are not nearly as funny as those of Plautus. Knowing that Plautus' comedy is low and that Terence's comedy is high, this is no surprise to us.

Terence's plots seem to build a comic situation rather than start out in the middle of one. Terence's plays are better off because of this because it allows him room to develop his characters. Character development is very noticeable in his plays. Plautus' plays are almost completely devoid of any character development.

Terence uses wise and cynical remarks for laughs just as Plautus did but he refrains from obscene and nonsense language. And, although Terence has many opportunities to slip into bringing in bedroom scenes and the like, he did not do it.

Terence makes good use of schemes but the schemes are very subtle and tricky. He uses cowards and blow-hards in these schemes. In the eventual working out of these schemes, someone always has to be made a fool of but this is done in usually quite a subtle way.

The plots of Terence's plays centered around love. The problems almost always came as a result of some mix up or confusion

between the lovers. It was then left up to the slave to iron out the matter so as to make everyone happy in the end. The slave was responsible for making the young man happy and keeping him in that state. This he had to do regardless of what means he had to use to attain his aims. This resulted in tricky schemes in every instance. The slave was the mastermind behind these schemes and he worked them out through the co-operation of his young master and his master's friends.

The schemes were either worked against the father of the slave's master directly or they were worked against his wishes. This usually set up a double fear for the slave. If things did not turn out well in one way, he could receive a whipping from his master. If they did not turn out well in another way, he received whippings from his master's father. The slave was seldom rewarded his freedom in the plays of Terence.

III

An Analysis of the Comic Characters in  
the Plays of Plautus

Taking leave of general conclusions, let us consider now some particular examples from the plays of each author beginning with Plautus'.

First, who are the comic characters that Plautus uses in his plays? Plautus delights in

...the life of imbecile fathers made only to be duped, and spendthrift sons; of jealous husbands, and dull wives; of wits, cunning, and wholly unscrupulous slaves; of parasites, lost cringing, sometimes threatening, but almost always outwitted by a duplicity superior to their own.... 12

Many well known classicists agree that the slave is above all Plautus' favorite character. In his book on Latin Literature, George Simcox says that

...perhaps Plautus spends more pains and sympathy upon the slave who helps the lover; the spirit of gay bravado in which his slaves treat the tyranny under which they live is the nearest approach to an ideal picture which he ever draws. 13

Another, possibly better known, classicist, Edith Hamilton agrees with Simcox. In one of her books on Latin Literature she writes,

...the character that stands out first of all, far beyond even the dominating figures of the father and the expensive lady, is the slave. He is the ancestor of all the devoted and agile servitors, models of fidelity and never fazed by any of their masters' difficulties, whom literature everywhere has made so familiar, but in Rome the role he played was more impor-

tant than any given him since. The portrait of the Roman family would lack its chief feature without the slave and no Roman comedy could be written without him. In every play he is the chief personage, the only one with brains, who succeeds in fooling all of the people all of the time. But in spite of his gay assurance and his triumphant success, his terrible lot in Rome is continually suggested--the cross. 14

Though there is a wide choice of characters to pick from in doing a comparison of this sort, the characters to be compared will be held to four. Namely, the slave, pimp, parasite, and soldier of fortune.

Since we have already expounded to a great extent on the slave of Plautus, let us continue the discussion on the slave.

We find that the slave is usually

the mainspring of action, and in whatever difficulties his tricks may land him, in most cases he emerges triumphant. Each one of Plautus' slaves is a specialist in deceit.... 15

Let us now analyze one of Plautus' slaves, Pseudolus, whom we find in the plays with the same name. Just to get an idea of how the slave works out his schemes, here is a brief resume of the slave's action in this particular play, which, by the way, is the best example of the slave character of Plautus.

The action goes as follows. The slave's young master, in the beginning of the play, is presented as being in despair at not having enough money to redeem his mistress, who had just then been sold by Ballio, the slave-dealer, to a soldier at the price of twenty minae. Fifteen of these twenty minae were to be paid as a downpayment, and when he sends the remaining five,

the girl would be delivered to him. Ballio was to recognize the soldier's messenger by his possession of an impression of a seal-ring, which the soldier had left behind as a pledge. Pseudolus, the slave, having met the soldier's messenger, who was on his way to deliver a letter containing the seal-ring impression and the remaining five minae, impersonates Ballio's slave, and the messenger gives him the letter containing the money and the token. While the messenger is refreshing himself at a tavern, Pseudolus persuades one of his friends, another slave, to pretend to be the messenger of the soldier, and to present the credentials (which Pseudolus places in his possession) to Ballio, who immediately acknowledges their authenticity, and, without any deliberation, hands over the girl. When the real messenger finally arrives, Ballio treats him as a fake hired by Pseudolus. Of course, the master gets his girl and the play ends on a happy note.

In this play (Pseudolus) Plautus operates the slave in one of his favorite ways, by insult. For instance, when Pseudolus is trying to trick Harpax, the soldier's messenger, into giving him the money for the girl, we have this type of dialogue between the two. This particular passage also is an example of the use of puns by Plautus, that is, the play on Harpy and Harpax.

Ps.           Avaunt, Harpax! You like me not!  
              By gad, you shan't get into this  
              house that's sure! No Harpy acts  
              here!

Harpax       I am wont to snatch my foemen from  
              the battle line alive; hence this

name of mine.  
Ps. Huh! Much more likely you snatched  
brass pots from other folks'  
houses! 16

In Pseudolus we also have a good example of the nonsense or slapstick scenes. Such a scene contributes nothing to the plot of the play, what plot there is, but they are certainly a source of amusement. We have an instance of this in the first scene of the play in which Calidorus, the lover, is presenting his problems to Pseudolus. He seemingly cannot find a solution to his problem so he asks Pseudolus, his slave, if he could help him. The dialogue goes as follows;

Cal. Are you not willing to...help me at  
all?  
Ps. What am I to do for you?  
Cal. Ah me!  
Ps. "Ah me"? Gad, spare no "Ah me's":  
I'll supply 'em.  
Cal. Oh dear, oh dear! Nowhere can I find  
a friend to...borrow of!  
Ps. Ah me!  
Cal. And not a sixpence have I!  
Ps. Ah me!  
Cal. And tomorrow that man will...take a-  
way my girl!  
Ps. Ah me!  
Cal. Is that the way you...help me?  
Ps. I give you what I've got sir; and I  
I've piled up enough "Ah me's" in  
our house to last forever. 17

The slave character in Pseudolus is, like all of Plautus' slaves, very loyal to his master. Plautus always drives this point home to the audience, usually by direct verbal contact between the slave, master, and audience, as in Pseudolus the slave says to Calidorus;

Ps. But never fear! I won't desert my  
loving master! 18

The slave of Plautus is also very obedient to his masters. He is obedient because, partly, of his deep sense of loyalty toward his master, but more so because of the possibility of punishment. We have an instance of this situation in The Braggart Warrior. We see the slave answering his master in this manner after being threatened with a punishment.

Sc1. Enough of your threatening! I know  
the cross will be my tomb. There's  
where my ancestors rest-father,  
grandfather, great-grandfather, and  
great, great, grandfather. 19

The actual suffering of the slave never took place on the stage whether it was just a whipping or the cross.

It is hard to say anything other than what has been mentioned in the preceding paragraphs about the slave character of Plautus. What has been said about the one slave character in this one particular play can be said, with just a small margin of error, about every one of Plautus' slave characters.

Plautus does not allow his slaves to become emotional. He treats the slave in a mechanical way. As a result we know as much about the "real" character of the slave as we can know about a machine's personality. In other words, a person reading the plays of Plautus, could not warm up to such a character so weakly drawn.

Turning our attention to the parasite character of Plautus, we see that he is also an important and comical character in most of his plays.

For Plautus, the parasite is a simple, harmless and often helpful person who hopes to earn a free meal by cheering people

up with his witty remarks and jokes and by making himself available for just about any odd jobs that had to be done. The parasite's chief concern was his stomach and in the eyes of the Romans, he was a sympathetic and, when hungry, a humorous person. They were great eaters, and Plautus, being aware of this, would make their mouths water when he brought the professional cooks on to the stage and had them recite long lists of tasty foods. The parasite plays an important role in seven of Plautus' plays and has minor roles in many more.

There is an un-named parasite in Asinaria who is the least interesting of all Plautus' parasites. The other six parasites are much more interesting. Curculio and Ergasilus, for example, parasites in The Captives, are very intelligent men, capable of carrying through a difficult mission, and deserving of a better fortune.

Gelasimus in Stichus is not so vivacious, but is a fellow of infinite wit. In his opening scene he says;

Dear, dear, I do suspect that I'm the son  
of old mother Hunger herself, for never  
since my birth have I had my fill. And no  
one ever will square accounts with his  
mother, or ever has, better than I square  
'em with my mother Hunger. Why, she car-  
ried me in her belly a mere ten months,  
while I've carried her in mine ten years  
or more. 20

Saturio in the Persa and Peniculus in the Menaechmi are less important and interesting. The one, Saturio, is ready to sell his daughter for a free meal and the other, Peniculus, becomes a traitor to his patron when he is disappointed over a meal.

The funniest parasite we actually see in the plays of Plautus, we see the least of. This is Artotrogus in The Braggart Warrior. Plautus uses the parasite in just one scene, the first, to acquaint us with the character of the soldier who we shall have occasion to investigate later.

The boasts of the soldier are quite unbelievable, but they are nothing compared to the flatteries of the parasite.

Here for instance, are two examples of Artotrogus in action. He is talking to the soldier, Pyrgopolynices, about some of his unbelievable feats of strength.

Pyrg. Where are you?

Art. Here, sir! And that elephant in India, for instance! My word, sir! How your fist did smash his forearm to flinders!

Pyrg. 'Twas but a careless tap!

Art. Lord, yes, sir! If you had really made an effort, your arm would have ~~clean~~ clean transperforated the beast, hide, flesh, bone, and all. 21

The second section comes a little later in the scene. Artotrogus is still discussing the soldier's military accomplishments. This time he is enumerating the number of men slain by this giant of a soldier.

Pyrg. So you remember, eh?

Art. Indeed I do, sir. One hundred and fifty in Cilicia...a hundred in... Jugotheevia...thirty Sardians... sixty Macedonians-that's the list of men you slew in a single day, sir.

Pyrg. The sum total being what?

Art. Seven thousand, sir.

Pyrg. Yes, it should come to that. Your computation is correct. 22

As was the case with his slave, we cannot know the personality or complete character of the parasite. We know him

from and for his external actions. Plautus restrains all emotion again, and as a result, all we know about the parasite is that he is a flatterer seeking to get his next meal through being funny, usually at another person's expense.

The pimp, another comic character of Plautus, has his special qualities about him too. They are not as obvious as the differences between the slave and the parasite characters however.

The fun we get out of the pimp comes as a result of the way he makes his living, as was the case with the parasite. The pimp makes his money in this way. He buys young girls in the slave market, trained them to be courtesans, and then sold them or lent them out for hire to make some easy money.

This trade, normally carried on by a foreigner, was legal but disreputable; and it necessarily involved some risks. The girls he bought were either the children of slaves sold by their owners, or prisoners of war sold as part of the booty, or children who had been kidnapped from their parents. If a girl could prove herself freeborn, she was to be surrendered without compensation.

The plots of four of Plautus' plays ride on that outside chance. In those plays the pimp plays the role of the villain, causing trouble for the hero and heroine; but he is a comic character and not a very formidable villain. At the end, he usually loses both his girl and money.

One short phrase which seems to sum up the character of the pimp very well is; he is out for the quick buck.

In Rudens or The Rope it happens that Labrax has put all his possessions on board a ship to go to some distant land where the prospects of doing business seemed to look good to him. It turns out that he is shipwrecked and he loses all his gold and silver and his two girls. As is usual for the pimp to do, there is much lamenting over his loss. Almost every line he says from the time of the shipwreck on has some mention about the loss of his estate. Of course everything works out so that everyone is happy in the end, including Labrax. He recovers his gold and silver but loses the two girls. One proves herself freeborn and the other is lost in a scheme worked by a slave.

In this passage from Rudens we hear Labrax once again telling the audience about the loss of his estate. This passage occurs right after he has learned that one of his girls was freeborn. This is also before he has recovered his gold and silver.

Who's a more unlucky wretch than me in all this world, with Plesidippus getting the judges to decide against me now? Now I'm sentenced to lose Palestra! I'm ruined! Why, I do believe we pimps are the sons of Joy, the way every mortal soul considers our troubles so enjoyable. Well, now I'll go into the temple of Venus here and see to the other one I own, and at least get away with her, the remaining remnant of my estate. 23

As was the case with the other characters of Plautus, we really do not know much about the real character of the pimp. He never shows any emotion. All we know about him is that he is a penny-pinching swindler, especially when he finds someone stupid enough to be tricked by his naive efforts.

Another one of Plautus' outstanding comic characters is his soldier. He does not use this particular character very often, but when he does, you can look for some of the finest slapstick comedy that has ever been written. The soldier seems to be the funniest of all Plautus' comic characters.

We see the soldier of fortune as a person

full of strange oaths and bearded like  
the pard. 24

The soldier appeared on the stage as he was in civil life, with his purse full of money and his head empty of sense.

Plautus' Captain Pyrgopolynices serves as the best example of the soldier of fortune in all of his plays. He is a very vain person and he thinks that all women he sets eyes on fall in love with him, as we can see in this passage where he is being tricked and made a fool of by some slaves. This scene presents Pyrgopolynices in dialogue with Milphidippa, who, unknown to him, is part of a plan to trick him out of his lover.

We see the passage opening with Pyrgopolynices saying;

Pyrg. ...Ah, she spoke my surname. May God  
grant you whatever you desire, woman.  
Mil. Permission to pass a lifetime with  
you, sir-  
Pyrg. You desire too much.  
Mil. I don't mean for myself, sir, but  
for my mistress, who's perishing  
for you.  
Pyrg. Many other women long for that same  
thing but they cannot be accomodated. 25

Plautus also has his soldier doing unbelievable and impossible deeds, such as we find talked about in this passage of dialogue between Artotrogus, the parasite, and Pyrgopolynices. Artotrogus is recalling some of the great slaughters of Pyrgo-

polynices.

Art. And how about that time in Cappadocia, sir, when you would have slain five hundred men all at one stroke, if your sword had not been dull? 26

As an instance of his display of vanity, we have this dialogue between Milphidippa, his new found sweetheart, and Pyrgopolynices.

Mil. I'll go and get the lady in whose behalf I'm acting, sir. Is there anything else you wish?

Pyrg. That I may be no handsomer than I am! Ah yes, my beauty is an endless source of trouble to me. 27

As was the case with the other characters so far considered, we have a very limited knowledge of the soldier character. All we really know about the soldier is that he is proud and a braggart. Again we have no presentation of any emotion.

IV

The Analysis of the Comic Characters in  
the Plays of Terence

Since not too much is written about Terence, we are limited to one source on his characters. I find that George Simcox delineates the comic characters of Terence rather well, however. He feels that,

It is almost impossible to care for anybody in his plays, but the unprotected ingenues in ambiguous positions, who hardly ever appear, and yet interest us so much more than their lovers. These hardly ever knew their own mind, and are in a state of abject dependence upon their slaves, whom they bully at every moment of difficulty. The old gentlemen are no better; they are made up of querulous, crabbed self-will, or else of cautious, sceptical good-nature, and recover their missing daughters without any sign of feeling except a little irritation with their wives for not having carried out the infanticide as was ordered. 28

I do feel that the slave character deserves more attention than that given him by Simcox.

Turning our attention to the individual comic characters of Terence, we see that he also has his favorite type of character. It seems that it is more of a technique or character device than an actual real character. This device is the use of the naive or inexperienced person.

He does not have one particular character whom he uses it on all the time, but more often than not, the father is the usual person who is treated in this way.

The best example of this is found in The Brothers. Demea, the father living in the country, is quite conservative and

strict in matters of discipline. In comparison with his brother, Micio, who lives in town, Demea is in the dark about the times. He is easily tricked and in general quite gullible no matter how absurd the scheme or lie might be. This accounts for half of the fun of the whole play. Demea also counts for the fun in the other half of the play when he changes his ways to the ways of his brother in town.

The shock and confusion he creates for the first few days of his renewal makes the last part of The Brothers hilarious.

Just in this one character alone we see as much, if not more, character development as we did in all the plays of Plautus. We see Demea develop from his conservative narrow minded ways, to liberal openmindedness. This is what makes this character different. This is what makes this particular character funny and good.

The slaves of Terence are schemers just as Plautus'. Unlike the slaves of Plautus, however, Terence's slaves are not the only ones with any intelligence, that is, for pulling off a tricky scheme. The slave is instrumental, through his schemes (the result of being bullied by his master), in solving the problems in most of Terence's plays. The most important part which the slaves play in Terence is that they bring out the fact that their young masters are unjust and contemptuous and that their old masters are as dull as they are suspicious. They did this mostly by way of using wise cracks and witty remarks. For instance in The Self-Tormentor, Syrus, making fun of his old master, who is trying to make himself appealing to a woman

much younger than he, says, behind his master's back, to the audience,

Hark at that now! The eagle, they say,  
has eternal youth. 29

We have a very good idea of the slave in Terence's plays as being a real existing human. He gives us some emotions to react on and to feel with him.

The parasite in Terence is his second best character. He is the man who has come to the end of his means and lives by his ability to make people laugh. He has a taste for luxury in general and believes that it can be enjoyed without submitting himself to insult. He thinks it needless to offer himself unconditionally as the butt of prosperity, when it pays better to dupe credulity, to play on the scruples of people, and to flatter vanity.

Flattery is one of the basic devices used by the parasite as we see in this passage spoken by Gnatho in The Eunuch. He is talking to Thraso trying to get in on a free meal.

Heavens! what a jewel wisdom is! I never  
come near you without going away a more  
skillful man. 30

The comedy of the parasite, in Terence, hardly ever descends to slapstick. There is not too much character development in the parasite but he gives the idea of being a real person with human sentiments. There is no particular passage to point this out from, but this is just the general conclusion one gets from reading the plays.

The pimp in the plays of Terence is mannerly. He is a tyrant

who explains in a most touching way that he only acts in defense of his own interests, and has no pleasure in unnecessary cruelty. The pimp is out for the quick buck in Terence as well as Plautus.

Light is brought to bear on the previous statement as we look at a passage from Phormio. In this passage Antipho, a cousin to Phaedria, the lover in the play, and his slave Geta, are trying to talk Dorio, the pimp, into selling Pamphilia to Phaedria. They do not have enough money to make the demands of Dorio though. And, Pamphilia is already promised to another man who wants to buy her. Because of this Antipho, Phaedria and Geta try to get Dorio to let them have first call on Pamphilia. Dorio tell them they can have first call on the girl if the price is right. Antipho answers,

Anti. Aren't you ashamed of your shiftiness?  
Dorio Not a bit, as long as it pays.  
Phae. Really now, Dorio, ought you to act in this way?  
Dorio I am what I am. If you like me, deal with me.  
Anti. My cousin to be cheated in this way?  
Dorio No indeed, Antipho, it's he cheats me. He knew this was my way, I thought his way was what it isn't. It was he took me in, I am the same to him as always. However, be that as it may, this I will do. The captain has promised the money for tomorrow; if you, Phaedria, bring it before he does, I will follow my rule of first paying first served. Good day to you. 31

Though the pimp is not the best drawn character of Terence's plays, he is nevertheless shown to be more than just a stereo-

type villain. We do not have a deep insight into his personality but we know the pimps of Terence better than those of Plautus because of the way they are drawn. We feel sure that the pimp of Terence could exist just as surely as a real person, as he exists on the stage.

Finally we come to the last important comic character. He is the soldier of fortune. Terence's soldier character is a braggart like Plautus'. We see that his bragging in matters of love is not overbearing. This point is evident as seen in this passage from The Eunuch. The soldier, Thraso, is talking to Gnatho, the parasite.

Thraso I certainly have a peculiar gift  
that lends grace to all my actions.  
Gnatho By Jove, yes, I've noticed it.  
Thraso For instance the king was always  
profuse in his thanks for any-  
thing I had done. Other men got  
less thanks. 32

There is some degree of restraint in his bragging though it be small. Restraint is also shown in his moments of cowardice and the affectation of military prowess. He gives himself the air of military instincts. For instance, when he is planning with his slaves as to how to break down a door, he talks as if he were directing an army on the battle field.

We find the character of the soldier a likeable human person. The things he says and does are not so extraordinary. It is possible for the human powers to do those things and more important, it is possible to believe in them.

In general, we can say that the characters of Terence are not overdone in the matter of ridicule. Terence makes us almost

serious by the interest and affection which he has for his characters. Though Terence's characters are the same description as those of Plautus, his slaves, captains and parasites are not so farcical. The pimp is a greedy merchant rather than a shameless agent of vice.

V

Comparison of Comic Characters

Now let us turn back to make a more evident comparison from the analyses of the individual comic characters.

The first character we analyzed was the slave. Both authors show him to be very loyal to his masters. The slaves were always obedient because of the threats of punishment from their masters, and also because they were loyal. The slaves of both authors were bullied by their masters every time they (their masters) got in a difficult situation. The slaves are the only ones with brains in Plautus' plays, but this is not always the case in Terence's plays.

The slave of Terence is not as funny as the slave of Plautus. We have a feeling though, that we know Terence's slave better than Plautus'. Terence, through his presentation, allows us to become more involved with the feelings of the slave. This is something we never experienced in Plautus' slave. If we do, it is only a momentary affair.

The conclusions we can make about the slave character, then, is that Plautus' slave is funnier but we cannot see much of a life-like person in him. Terence's slave is convincingly human but not so funny.

The next character we took was the parasite. The parasites of Plautus are funny chiefly by reason of their insatiable hunger. The parasite of Terence, though affected likewise by hunger, has more than just a hunger for food. He has a greedy de-

sire to live like a king in all respects. The parasites in the plays of Terence are not the butt of jokes or schemes as the parasites of Plautus are.

The closest any of Plautus' parasites comes to Terence's is the parasite Artotrogus in The Braggart Warrior.

Both Plautus and Terence believe very much in the use of flattery but there is a different use of flattery by both. Plautus' parasite in The Braggart Warrior flatters the soldier by giving him a fabulous list of killed and wounded. The parasite flatters the soldier in Terence's play, The Eunuch, by giving the impression that he never meets the soldier without going away the wiser.

In general we can conclude that the parasite of Terence is more convincing, as a human, than the parasite of Plautus.

We notice less difference between the pimp of Plautus and Terence than perhaps any of the other characters heretofore mentioned. We notice that the pimp in Terence does not act in such a contemptuous or insulting way to the lover as he does in Plautus.

The pimp in Terence could be reasoned with whereas the only way to get anything out of Plautus' pimp was to trick or cheat him out of it.

Again we notice that the same thing creates the difference between the pimp of Plautus and the pimp of Terence. The pimp of Terence is more convincing as an actual existing human, than Plautus' pimp who seems unreal because of his total harshness and non-emotionality.

The last character we looked at was the soldier. In Plautus we see him unrestrained in bragging and cowardice. He is not to be outdone in military endeavors either.

We find the soldier of Terence bragging and cowardly. We also find him telling of his great military accomplishments. However, we see all this in a much more restrained way in Terence than we do in Plautus. And, although the soldier does tell of some rather fascinating and extraordinary deeds, they are, in comparison to those of Plautus' soldier, almost believable. Terence sacrifices a good deal of humor through toning down his characters in this way. As a matter of fact, it can be generally said that Terence loses a lot of his humor in all of his characters through toning them down. We do, however, become better acquainted with the character of Terence partly because of this toning down, and partly because of the fact that they are just better drawn than those of Plautus.

In this book on Latin Literature, Richard Rose agrees when he says, "Plautus' characters lack variety and depth." 33

As a sort of general conclusion then, it can be said that the pimp, slave, soldier and parasite of Plautus differ only in what happens to them, and not in what they are. ?

Terence, on the other hand, does differ his characters for what they are.

Looking at the comic characters from the type of comedy each author uses we see a vast difference. Terence is intellectually superior to Plautus as far as comedy goes. He puts emphasis on drawing characters and maintaining them till the

end of the play.

Plautus puts the emphasis on ridicule. Many classicists agree that Terence is sadly lacking in comic power. This seems to be true only when comparing Terence and Plautus. This is not an unfair comparison but the plays of Terence do seem dead after reading Plautus.

Taking the plays of Terence for what they are, and comparing him to Plautus in no way, there is a quantity of good comedy surpassed by few.

The main difference between Plautus and Terence lies in the type of comedy each uses. Plautus uses the overly obvious type of comedy and situation for laughs, while Terence uses or tries to make good use of human nature, and its confusions and complications to get laughs.

Another factor of difference is language. The language of Plautus is richer than that of Terence, but it is far from being as equal, uniform and clean as Terence's.

Plautus' language often times becomes vulgar but never really obscene. Terence steers clear of such language.

For the above reasons, and the others stated before them, it is easy to see how the comedy of Plautus is funnier than that of Terence's.

Another difference between Plautus and Terence, though not so important here, is the style. Plautus style is very clumsy. He obviously had no intention of writing in a beautiful flowing style.

Terence's style, on the contrary, is beautiful. He has the style of a professional playwright, while Plautus' style is that of the amateur.

Plautus' vocabulary is richer than Terence's but he does not use it as well as Terence does.

Terence attends more to elegance and delicacy in expression of person while Plautus attends more to comic expression.

VI

Is One Author Better than the Other?

Is the presentation of the comic character of one author better than that of the other? Keeping the preceding facts in mind, it is impossible to come out blindly and say that one is better than the other in respect to presentation of the comic character.

It is an unquestionable fact that Terence draws his characters much better than Plautus. It is also a fact that the comic characters of Terence are not nearly as funny as those of Plautus.

As far as presentation and depth of "comic" character goes, it seems as though Plautus achieves the presentation better and Terence the depth better. Plautus achieves his end, comed, better than Terence also.

It appears that no author can be said to be the best. If it is said of the one or the other, it must be said in regard to certain aspects of each one's plays.

Terence then, can be said to be the best as far as how well the characters are drawn and as far as plot and character development go.

As far as comedy goes, Plautus can be said to be the best. His characters, however, are weakly drawn, and his plots are not well developed at all.

Both authors are thoroughly enjoyable to read. Plautus is

good for laughs and a lot of them. The enjoyment one gets from reading Terence is more elegant and sophisticated. The reader can enjoy a more intellectual humor along with, usually, a good plot or story line.

Notes

1. E.P. Morris, The Captives and Trinummus of Plautus, P. XIII.
2. Charles Cruttwell, A History of Roman Literature, P. 53.
3. Edith Hamilton, The Roman Way, P. 35.
4. idem., P. 34.
5. idem., P. 41.
6. Hornstein, Percy, Brown, The Reader's Companion To World Literature, P. 104.
7. idem., P. 104.
8. idem., P. 104.
9. idem., P. 105.
10. Plautus, Casina, V, 2.
  - Cleost. Age audacter postquam decubuisti, inde volo memorare quid est factum.
  - Ol. Oh, erat maximum. Ferrum ne haberet metui; id quaerere ocepi dum gladium quaero, ne habeat, arripio capulum. Sed cum cogito, non habuit gladium, nam esset frigidus.
  - Cleost. Eloquere.
  - Ol. At pudet.
  - Cleost. Num radix fuit.
  - Ol. Non fuit.
  - Cleost. Num cucumis?
  - Ol. Profecto hercle non fuit quicquam holerum, nisi, quidquid erat, calamitas profecto attigerat numquam. Ita, quidquid erat, grande erat.
  - Myrr. Quid fit denique? Edisserta.
  - Ol. Ibi appello, "Casina" inquam, "amabo, mea uxorcula, cur virum tuum sic me spernis? Nimis tu quidem hercle immerito meo mi haec facis, quia mihi te expetivi." Illa haud verbum facit et saepit veste id qui estis mulieres. Ubi illum saltum video opsaeptum, rogo ut altero sinat ire.

11. Plautus, The Pot of Gold or Aulularia, II,4.  
Pyth. Postquam obsonavit erus et con-  
duxit coquos tibicinasque hasce  
apud forum, edixit mihi ut dis-  
pertirem obsonium hic bifariam.  
Anthr. Me quidem hercle, dicam tibi palam,  
non divides. Si quo tu totum me ire  
vis, operam dabo.  
Cong. Bellum et pudicum vero prostibulum  
populi. Post si quis vellet, te haud  
non velles dividi.
12. Charles Cruttwell, op. cit., P. 44.
13. G.A. Simcox, A History of Latin Literature, P. 46.
14. Edith Hamilton, op. cit., P. 31.
15. F.A. Wright, Three Roman Poets, P. 36.
16. Plautus, Pseudolus, II,2.  
Ps. Apage te, Harpax, hau places; huc  
quidem hercle haud ibis intro, ne  
quid <sup>ἀφραγ</sup> feceris.  
Har. Hostis vivos rapere soleo ex acie:  
eo hoc nomen mihi est.  
Ps. Pōl te multo magis opinor vasa athena  
ex aedibus.
17. idem., I,1.  
Cal. Nilne adiuvarē me audes?  
Ps. Quid faciam tibi?  
Cal. Eheu.  
Ps. Eheu? Id quidem hercle ne parsis:  
dabo.  
Cal. Miser sum, argentum nusquam mutuom.  
Ps. Eheu.  
Cal. Neque intus nummus ullus est.  
Ps. Eheu.  
Cal. Ille abducturus est mulierem cras.  
Ps. Eheu.  
Cal. Istocine pacto me adiuvas?  
Ps. Do id quod mihi est; nam is mihi  
thesaurus iugis in nostra est domo.
18. idem., I,1.  
Ps. Vero ego te amantem, ne pave, non  
deseram.
19. Plautus, The Braggart Warrior, II,4.  
Scel. Noli minitari: scio crucem futuram  
mihi sepulcrum; ibi mei sunt maiores

siti, pater, avos, proavos, abavos.

20. Plautus, Stichus, I,3.

Gel. Famem ego fuisse suspicor matrem  
mihi, nam postquam natus sum, satur  
numquam fui. Neque quisquam melius ~~referet~~  
referet matri gratiam neque rettulit,  
quam ego refero meae matri Fami. Nam  
illa me in alvo menses gestavit decem,  
at ego illam in alvo gesto plus annos  
decem.

21. Plautus, The Braggart Warrior, I,1.

Pyrg. Ubi es tu?

Art. Eccum. Edepol vel elephanto in India,  
quo pacto ei pugno praefregisti brac-  
chium.

Pyrg. Quid, bracchium?

Art. Illud dicere volui, femur.

Pyrg. At indiligenter iceram.

Art. Pol si quidem conisus esses, per  
corium, per viscera perque os ele-  
phanti transmineret bracchium.

22. Idem., I,1.

Pyrg. Ecquid meministi?

Art. Memini: centum in Cilicia et quin-  
quaginta, centum in Scytholatronia,  
triginta Sardos, sexaginta Macedones  
sunt homines quos tu occidisti uno  
die.

Pyrg. Quanta istaec hominum summast?

Art. Septem milia.

Pyrg. Tantum esse oportet. Recte rationem  
tenes.

23. Plautus, Rudens, V,1.

Labr. Quis me est mortalis miserior qui vivat  
alter hodie, quem ad recuperatores mo-  
do damnavit Plesidippus? Abiudicata a  
me modo est Palaestra. Perditus sum.  
Nam lenones ex Gaudio credo esse pro-  
creatos, ita omnes mortales, si quid  
est mali lenoni, gaudent. Nunc alteram  
illam quae mea est visam huc in Veneris  
fanum, saltem ut eam abducam, de bonis  
quod restat reliquiarum.

24. F.A. Wright, op.cit., P. 35

25. Plautus, The Braggart Warrior, IV,2.

Pyrg. Meum cognomentum commemoravit. Di tibi

- dent quaecumque optes.  
Milph. Tecum aetatem exigere ut liceat—  
Pyrg. Nimum optas.  
Milph. Non me dico, sed eram meam, quae te demoritur.  
Pyrg. Multae aliae idem istuc cupiunt, quibus copis non est.
26. idem., I,1.  
Art. Quid in Cappadocia, ubi tu quingentos simul, ni habes machaera foret, uno ictu occideras?
27. idem., IV,2.  
Milph. Ibo atque illam huc adducam, propter quam opera est mihi. Numquid vis?  
Pyrg. Ne magis sim pulcher quam sum, ita me mea forma habet sollicitum.
28. G.A. Simcox, op. cit., P. 57.
29. Terence, The Self-Tormentor, III,2.  
Syr. "Nil" narras? Visa verost, quod dici solet, aquilae senectus.
30. Terence, The Eunuch, IV,6.  
Gna. Di vostram fidem, quantist sapere! Numquam accedo, quin abs te abeam doctior.
31. Terence, Phormio, III,1.  
Anti. Non pudet vanitatis?  
Dor. Minime, dum ob rem.  
Phae. Dorio, itane tandem facere oportet?  
Dor. Sic sum: si placeo, utere.  
Anti. Sic hunc decipi!  
Dor. Immo enim vero, Antipho, hic me decipit: nam hic me scibat huius modi esse, ego hunc esse aliter credidi; iste me fefellit, ego isti nilo sum aliter ac fui. Sed utut haec sunt, tamen hoc faciam: cras mane artentum mihi miles dare se dixit: si tu prior attuleris, Phaedria, mea lege utar, ut potior sit qui prior ad dandumst. Vale.
32. Terence, The Eunuch, III,1.  
Thra. Est istuc datum profecto, ut grata mihi sint quae facio omnia.  
Gna. Advorti hercule animum.  
Thra. Vel rex semper maxumas mihi agebat quidquid feceram: aliis non item.

33. R.J. Rose, A Handbook of Latin Literature, P. 40.

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